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Context to the nugget

BJ speaks about the ABC of tiny habits – Anchor, Behaviour and Celebration. He goes on to speak about the importance of having an authentic celebration as it causes dopamine regulation that leads to a habit getting cemented in your life. He also urges us to keep the habit tiny before we expand it. He says it is more important to bake the habit even if it is microscopic before we amplify it to the level that would make a meaningful difference in our lives.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): In the book you talk about the Maui habit as soon as we get up. You are in Maui; I love Maui and it's a good place to start. Talk to us about what it is about and why it makes such a big difference to our lives.

BJ Fogg (BJ): Yeah, in the book *Tiny Habits*, there's only one habit I prescribe for everybody. The rest of the book is how to create any habit that you want but early on I say start doing this one habit and it goes like this. After your feet touch the floor in the morning as you are getting out of bed say, it's going to be a great day. Say those seven words and I prescribe that habit for everybody because I have so much feedback over the years of teaching tiny habits and advocating for that particular habit that it made me very confident that every reader of the book would benefit from saying it's going to be a great day as you get out of bed. And so, it's especially funny when I am here in Maui doing it. I get out of bed and I look out the window and there's the ocean and sometimes the moon, so I get up kind of early, sometimes the moon is just over the ocean and it's really easy to say it's going to be a great day. In other context, let's say I am traveling and I am tired and I am some hotel room and I am really wondering why I am there, I still say even if I don't believe it's going to be a great day, I say it's going to be a great day somehow and that opens the door, opens the possibility to having a great day. And so, it's just seven words and some people change it up that it's going to be an awesome day, some people change the timing, you know, as they are brushing their teeth in the morning they say, that's fine. But the key seems to be that by stating that intention your brain actually entertains the possibility it could be a great day and if you are waking up in a great spot and you think it will be, it helps you optimize for making it a great day.

DJ: Got it. And you also in the book before we get into the three pieces you spoke about motivation, ability and prompt, you also talk about the ABC of tiny habits: anchor, behaviour and celebration and I was curious about the three but more specifically celebration, but I would love to hear from you on how you see the three and why each of these elements are required for us to sow a habit seed in our lives.

BJ: So, the tiny habits method was derived from my behaviour model. So... and we will probably get to this but motivation, ability and prompt, the core components are embedded in the method itself. So, the ABC of tiny habits is kind of an accident that it's ABC. That was not intentional, it just happened, but A stands for the anchor, so that's the thing you already do, it's solid and reliable in your life. The anchor then reminds you to do the new habit. So, the B is the behaviour, what's the tiny behaviour? So, brushing might be your anchor, you always brush and let's say you don't have the habit of flossing. So flossing is what then comes right after brushing. So, brushing becomes the reminder to floss. That's how you do it in the tiny habits method. You don't put a poster, you don't use alarms, you use an existing routine, in tiny habits we call it an anchor to be the reminder for the new habit and you don't make the habit big, you make it super tiny. So, if you want to floss you perhaps just floss one tooth, if you want to meditate maybe it's just three breaths. So, you just scale it back so, so tiny and the C part stands for celebration and that is a technique to cause a positive emotion inside yourself, an instant positive emotion, and it's that emotion that wires that habit. And so if I am flossing one tooth, and if I go, way to go BJ, I look in the mirror and I smile at myself and I feel a positive emotion, what I am doing with that emotion, with that hack, like way to go BJ, I am wiring that habit into my brain. So, it's a new technique, it's a new way of looking at habits, it's really effective if you can find the authentic celebration and you can wire in habits very quickly by doing it. So, it's not about repetition, it's about the emotion that you feel while you are doing the new behaviour, that's what causes... if it's a positive emotion that's what causes the habit to form.

DJ: And I like the word authentic celebration. Could you sort of double click on the word authentic and how that plays up before we think about something...

BJ: I'll triple click. It's so important, it's so important. You know, this morning I was teaching tiny habits at five in the morning and one of the celebrations that was natural for somebody was, you know, hands over their head like victory, like yeah, like you would see a runner crossing the marathon finish line. That for a lot of people is a natural celebration that helps them feel like yeah, I succeeded but for some people it's going to make them feel foolish. So, if doing that makes you feel foolish or awkward or silly it's not going to work. So, you got to find what works for you and there's a few simple exercises you can do for this. So, let's say you are watching a game of cricket and your team is behind and at the last moment your team wins. What do you do as you see your team win? Whatever your natural reaction is, that could be a great celebration for tiny habits. You just bring that in and you do it after you floss. Or think about when you get your exam back and you got a perfect score and you are alone, right, you are not in the class, you are alone and you get it, what do you do? Let's say, for example, you throwing a piece of paper into the trash bin across the room and you are not sure you are going to make it but you throw it and it goes in, what do you do at that moment? Those are all clues of what your natural celebration would be, so you take those clues and then you actually apply it deliberately so you don't leave that emotion to chance in tiny habits you deliberately, you hack that emotion in order to change what's going on chemically in the brain and it has to do with dopamine regulation and that's what rewires the brain.

DJ: Got it. I love the fact that you picked cricket for the analogy.

BJ: Ba-doom, surprisingly enough in fourth grade in Fresno, California we learned to play cricket which was really, really odd, but we did a lot of odd things when I was a kid.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Couple of points to highlight here.

- In the book BJ speaks about choosing an anchor a bit like figuring out where you want to hang a painting in your home. You have a range of options to choose from but you need to be thoughtful about where you hang it. I found that metaphor quite powerful in the context of understanding where to insert a new habit in our lives.
- Celebration is something that we sometimes forget in the mix; In my experience, especially the Type A people end up going hammer and tongs behind a building a new habit. Research shows that dopamine has an interesting role to play in the way new habits get formed. And dopamine gets released when we feel good about something. So, not forgetting that link in the chain is critical for us to let the habit grow organically rather than push it down our system

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End of nugget transcription

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BJ Fogg - Nuggets

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About Deepak Jayaraman

Deepak seeks to unlock human potential of senior executive's / leadership teams by working with them as an Executive Coach / Sounding Board / Transition Advisor. You can know more about his work [here](#).

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